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ABSTRACT

There is a great need to build effective partnerships to serve rural communites. Rural schools are excellent places for new private sector partnerships, especially those concerned with utilizing the new educational technology uniquely suited to compensate for rural isolation and lack of financial and cultural resources. In many rural areas, the school is central to helping create the "sense of community" that is so neccessary. The Department of Education has recognized the unique and valuable contributions rural America has made to the social and economic development of this country. Because rural areas have not received the emphasis on education that they deserve (i.e., "simple equity"), the Department of Education has adopted a policy on rural education and the rural family for the '80s, which states in part, "Rural education shall receive an equitable share of the information, services, assistance and funds available from and through the Department of Education and its programs." During the past year, the Department has taken many specific actions to carry out the various initiatives which constitute this policy. Briefly discussed are some contemporary characteristics of rural America and rural education, how the Department is advancing the cause of rural education, and how partnerships in education can aid the improvement of rural education. (NQA)

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Press Release

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SPEECH DELIVERED BY

T. H. BELL

U. S. SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

RURAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE

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NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS FOR QUALITY EDUCATION IN RURAL AMERICA

JUNE 28, 1984 -- 8:30 A.M.

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- MAYFLOWER HOTEL

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THANK YOU BOB [DR. WORTHINGTON] FOR THAT KIND INTRODUCTION. I AM VERY PLEASED TO BE ABLE TO JOIN THIS GROUP TODAY AS YOU MEET TO DISCUSS BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS FOR EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT IN RURAL COMMUNITIES. THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION AND THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RECOGNIZE THE VERY UNIQUE AND VALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS THAT THE RURAL COMMUNITIES OF AMERICA HAVE MADE AND WILL CONTINUE TO MAKE TO OUR COUNTRY. RURAL AMERICA REPRESENTS MUCH OF WHAT IS GOOD AND ENDURING IN OUR SOCIETY AND CONTAINS MANY OF THOSE TRADITIONAL AMERICAN VALUES THAT WILL KEEP OUR SOCIETY STRONG IN FUTURE YEARS.

I BRING YOU THE PRESIDENT'S GREETINGS AND BEST WISHES FOR THE SUCCESS OF THIS IMPORTANT CONFERENCE. THE PRESIDENT WAS UNABLE TO BE HERE TODAY, BUT HE SENT A PERSONAL GREETING TO ALL OF YOU.

[LETTER ATTACHED]

I JOIN PRESIDENT REAGAN IN COMMENDING EACH OF YOU FOR YOUR EFFORTS TO BUILD COOPERATIVE PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE PURPOSE OF ENHANCING EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION THROUGHOUT RURAL AMERICA.

TODAY I WOULD LIKE TO TALK BRIEFLY ABOUT SOME OF THE CONTEMPORARY CHARACTERISTICS OF RURAL AMERICA AND RURAL EDUCATION, WHAT THE DEPARTMENT IS DOING TO ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF RURAL EDUCATION, AND HOW PARTNERSHIPS IN EDUCATION CAN AID THE IMPROVEMENT OF RURAL EDUCATION.

MIDDLE Of PAGE #1

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

June 26, 1984

I am delighted to send my warm greetings to all those gathered for the National Rural Education Conference.

Your theme, "Building Partnerships for Quality Education in Rural America," is in direct support of my efforts to promote excellence in education in this National Year of Partnerships in Education. America's future depends upon the health and vitality of our system of education. The training and learning of our people is everyone's concern. We must all do our part to improve the level of knowledge and understanding of our fellow citizens.

This event helps address the needs and concerns of a significant and growing segment of our population, the over 59 million Americans who live in rural America. My Administration maintains a strong commitment to rural education and understands its significant role in the future of our country.

I wish all of you a very successful conference and ask that you continue your efforts to build partnerships to improve the quality of education in rural America.

Ronald Reagan

First I'd like to review some rural statistics and then mention some trends that they suggest:

- In 1790 the first federal census found that 19 out of 20 Americans were rural dwellers and it wasn't until 1920 that more Americans lived in urban areas than in rural ones!

- It now appears that the century long trend of population shift from rural to urban areas has been halted. In 1970 the rural population was 53.9 million (26.5%) and in 1980 rural population had increased to 59.5 million (26.3%). And in 1983 only 5.8 million Americans (or 2.1%) lived on farms. What this means is that the growth in rural America has been due largely to non-farm population.

These facts have major implications for the development of education strategies in rural communities. A decline in the nonfarm population means that rural America is experiencing greater diversity than ever before within its communities. Now more than ever there is a tremendous need to build effective partnerships to serve the members, both old and new, of the rural communities.

Two sets of facts on rural schools are also significant for the development of rural education policy:

- In 1981-82 there were 6,586 public school districts that enrolled fewer than 600 pupils.

THESE VERY SMALL SYSTEMS, MOST OF WHICH ARE LOCATED IN RURAL AREAS, CONSTITUTING 41.5% OF ALL THE SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN THE COUNTRY BUT THEY ENROLLED ONLY 3.9% OF THE CHILDREN IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

- o THAT SYMBOL OF RURAL AMERICA - THE ONE TEACHER SCHOOL IS GRADUALLY BEING ELIMINATED IN THIS COUNTRY. AT THE END OF W.W.II (1945-1946) THERE WERE NEARLY 87,000 ONE TEACHER SCHOOLS IN THE U.S. TODAY ONLY ABOUT 800 OF THESE ONE TEACHER SCHOOLS ARE IN EXISTENCE.

THE OBVIOUS ADVANTAGES OR STRENGTHS OF RURAL SCHOOLS ARE WELL KNOWN. I SPEAK FROM EXPERIENCE HAVING GONE TO THEM IN LAVA HOT SPRINGS, IDAHO IN THE DAYS OF MY YOUTH:

- o THE CLASSES ARE SMALL
- o INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION IS THE ORDER OF THE DAY.
- o THE STUDENTS HAVE MANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEADERSHIP POSITIONS AND DEVELOP THEIR INDIVIDUAL TALENT.
- o A HIGHER PARTICIPATION IS POSSIBLE AND EXPECTED IN EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES.

THERE ARE ALSO THE EQUALLY WELL KNOWN DISADVANTAGES OF SMALL, RURAL SCHOOLS:

- o THE FACULTY MUST TEACH MANY DIFFERENT SUBJECTS, SOME OUT OF THEIR FIELDS.
- o THE SCHOOLS OFTEN LACK EXPENSIVE LABS, LIBRARIES OR SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT.
- o THEY ARE OFTEN RATHER ISOLATED AND LACKING THE CULTURAL ASSESTS FOUND IN URBAN AREAS (MUSEUMS, LIBRARIES, THEATRE, CONCERTS, ETC.).
- o THEY GENERALLY LACK ADEQUATE FINANCIAL RESOURCES.

IT SEEMS TO ME THAT RURAL SCHOOLS ARE EXCELLENT PLACES FOR NEW PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS, ESPECIALLY THOSE THAT ARE CONCERNED WITH UTILIZING THE NEW EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY - COMPUTERS, VIDEO DISCS, T.V., VIDEO CASSETTES, ETC., UNIQUELY SUITED TO COMPENSATE FOR RURAL ISOLATION AND LACK OF FINANCIAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES. IT'S NOT TOO FAR FETCHED TO LOOK FORWARD TO THE DAY WHEN THE NEW TECHNOLOGY HAS AS SIGNIFICANT AN IMPACT ON RURAL EDUCATION AS RADIO AND T.V. HAD ON OUR FATHERS' LIFESTYLE. IN FACT THANKS TO THE GENEROUS AND FARSIGHTED SUPPORT OF BILL NORRIS, CHAIRMAN OF CONTROL DATA CORPORATION, A MODEL RURAL COMMUNITY EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED IN FOREST CITY, IOWA DESIGNED TO BUILD COMPUTER LITERACY AND COMPUTER-BASED EDUCATION INTO THE MAINSTREAM OF FOREST CITY COMMUNITY LIFE.

BECAUSE I AM A PRODUCT OF SMALL RURAL TOWNS AND SMALL RURAL COLLEGES, I HAVE A WARM SPOT FOR THE TYPE OF INSTITUTIONS THAT YOU REPRESENT, AND FOR THE ALMOST SACRED CAUSE OF RURAL EDUCATION THAT YOU SO EFFECTIVELY ADVOCATE.

SOCIOLOGISTS HAVE OBSERVED THAT A STATE'S CHARACTER, CULTURE, ECONOMY, VALUES, BELIEFS, AND SOCIAL ATTITUDES HAVE BEEN TRADITIONALLY SHAPED BY ITS SMALL TOWNS.

-- I KNOW THAT IS TRUE FROM MY OWN EXPERIENCE OF GROWING UP IN LAVA HOT SPRINGS, IDAHO - POPULATION 467 (1980).

RURAL AREAS HAVE MADE OBVIOUSLY IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STATE AND NATION'S ECONOMY BY THE PRODUCE OF ITS SOIL AND FORESTS - ITS FOOD AND FIBRE. BUT IT IS OFTEN OVERLOOKED THAT THE STATE AND REGION'S VERY CHARACTER HAS BEEN STAMPED BY THE SMALL TOWNS.

I AGREE COMPLETELY WITH THE OBSERVATIONS OF AN IOWA NEWSPAPER THAT: "THE BELIEFS, VALUES, AND TABOOS CULTIVATED THERE - AROUND THE FAMILY DINNER TABLE, OR IN A MAIN STREET CAFE, AT A CHURCH CIRCLE MEETING OR IN A HIGH SCHOOL CLASS HAVE HAD A POWERFUL INFLUENCE ON THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ATTITUDES OF THE STATE'S PEOPLE."

ANOTHER WAY OF EXPRESSING AN INSIGHT INTO THE LASTING VALUES OF RURAL AMERICA AND THE NEED TO PRESERVE IT WAS WRITTEN BY OLIVER GOLDSMITH IN HIS DESERTED VILLAGE (1770):

"ILL FARES THE LAND, TO HASTENING ILLS A PREY
WHERE WEALTH ACCUMULATES, AND MEN DECAY;
PRINCES AND LORDS MAY FLOURISH, OR MAY FADE;
A BREATH CAN MAKE THEM, AS A BREATH HAS MADE;
BUT A BOLD PEASANTRY, THEIR COUNTRY'S PRIDE;
WHEN ONCE DESTROYED, CAN NEVER BE SUPPLIED.

BECAUSE OF MY UPBRINGING AND MY RURAL ROOTS, I HAVE LONG WORRIED THAT MY STATE AND REGION'S CHARACTER, CULTURE, ECONOMY, VALUES, BELIEFS, AND SOCIAL ATTITUDES HAVE BEEN PLACED IN GRAVE JEOPARDY BY THE MASSIVE SHIFT IN POPULATION OVER THE LAST 50 YEARS FROM RURAL TO URBAN AREAS WITH THE FOLLOWING RESULTS:

-- DECLINE OF SMALL FARMS
-- DECLINE OF SMALL COMMUNITIES
-- DECLINE OF GRADE SCHOOLS AND HIGH SCHOOLS
-- RAPID AND INCREASING OUT MIGRATION OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

NATURALLY I WAS VERY PLEASED TO READ THAT PRELIMINARY DATA FROM THE 1980 CENSUS INDICATES THAT THIS CENTURY-LONG TREND IS SLOWLY REVERSING ITSELF AS AMERICAN POPULATION SHIFTS FROM:

-- FROST BELT TO SUN BELT
-- BIG CITIES TO SMALL TOWN
-- URBAN TO RURAL AREAS

I ALSO KNOW FROM MY EXPERIENCE THAT AS LONG AS THE LOCAL SCHOOLS ARE ALIVE AND WELL, THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES THRIVE, AND VICE VERSA. FOR IN MANY OF THESE RURAL AREAS THE SCHOOL IS CENTRAL TO HELPING CREATE THE "SENSE OF COMMUNITY" THAT IS SO NECESSARY. THAT IS WHY I REGARD THE IMPROVEMENT OF RURAL EDUCATION AND RURAL FAMILY EDUCATION AN ALMOST SACRED CAUSE.

THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RECOGNIZES THE UNIQUE AND VALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS RURAL AMERICA HAS MADE TO BOTH THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF OUR COUNTRY.

BECAUSE THE RURAL AREAS HAVE NOT RECEIVED THE EMPHASIS ON EDUCATION THAT THEY DESERVE I.E., SIMPLE EQUITY, THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, HAS AS YOU KNOW ADOPTED A POLICY ON RURAL EDUCATION AND RURAL FAMILY POLICY FOR THE '80S, WHICH STATES IN PART:

> "RURAL EDUCATION SHALL RECEIVE AN EQUITABLE SHARE OF THE INFORMATION, SERVICES, ASSISTANCE AND FUNDS AVAILABLE FROM AND THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND ITS PROGRAMS."

DURING THE PAST YEAR, THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION HAS TAKEN MANY SPECIFIC ACTIONS TO CARRY OUT THE VARIOUS INITIATIVES WHICH CONSTITUTE THIS POLICY. I'M NOT GOING TO SPEND THE TIME THIS MORNING TO DESCRIBE ALL THE GREAT WORK BOB AND HIS STAFF HAVE ACCOMPLISHED.

IN SEPTEMBER THE RURAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE WILL SUBMIT A DETAILED REPORT TO ME ON THE PROGRESS WE HAVE MADE IN IMPLEMENTING OUR RURAL EDUCATION POLICY DURING THIS FISCAL YEAR. I'M SURE BOB WILL BE PLEASED TO GIVE YOU A COPY AFTER I'VE HAD TIME TO READ IT. I HOPE I'LL BE READING A GREAT DEAL ABOUT THE MANY PARTNERSHIPS IN RURAL EDUCATION THAT HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED.

I TRUST YOU'LL CONTINUE TO INCLUDE THE BUILDING OUR AMERICAN COMMUNITIES PROGRAM AND THE SUPERVISED OCCUPATIONAL EXPERIENCE PROGRAM IN YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

THESE TWO PROGRAMS ARE ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT TO AMERICAN EDUCATION, TO THE FUTURE OF AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND TO THE CONTINUED VIABILITY OF RURAL AMERICA AND ARE EXCELLENCE EXAMPLES OF PARTNERSHIPS IN EDUCATION.

THE BUILDING OF AMERICAN COMMUNITIES PROGRAM WAS BEGUN IN 1971. SINCE THAT TIME BUILDING OUR AMERICAN COMMUNITIES PROGRAM HAS RECEIVED THE TECHNICAL SUPPORT OF THE FARMERS HOME ADMINISTRATION, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, NATIONAL VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION AND THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION. IT IS SPONSORED BY R.J. REYNOLDS INDUSTRIES, INC. OF WINSTON-SALEM, NORTH CAROLINA.

AS I WAS REVIEWING MY REMARKS FOR TODAY IT OCCURED TO ME THAT RURAL AMERICANS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN INVOLVED IN MANY FORMS OF SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS. EVERYTIME YOU PUT OUT A YEARBOOK AND ALL THOSE LOCAL BUSINESSMEN AND WOMEN PAY A FEE TO HAVE A SMALL AD PRINTED IN THE BACK OF THE BOOK -- THAT IS A PARTNERSHIP. THOSE BUSINESSES KNOW THAT IN REALITY, THE ADS WILL PROBABLY NOT EARN THEM MUCH, IF ANY, INCREASE IN PROFITS. ESSENTIALLY THEY ARE MAKING A DONATION TO YOUR SCHOOLS. OTHER EXAMPLES OF THESE PARTNERSHIPS INCLUDE THE CAR DEALER WHO LOANS CARS FOR THE DRIVERS ED CLASS OR THE SCHOOL PARADE; THE BUSINESS THAT CONTRIBUTES MONEY TO BUY A NEW GOAL POST OR UNIFORMS FOR THE BAND; AND THE PEOPLE WHO CONTRIBUTE TIME AND MONEY TO MAKE COSTUMES FOR THE SCHOOL PLAY.

THESE TYPES OF PARTNERSHIPS ARE IMPORTANT AND ARE EVIDENCE TO ME THAT PEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN AND ARE STILL INTERESTED IN SCHOOLS. THEY WANT TO HELP. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AS EDUCATORS TO GIVE THEM THAT OPPORTUNITY. JUST AS YOU CAN GET A COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT THE STUDENT CAR WASH THAT WILL HELP PAY FOR NEW LIBRARY BOOKS, YOU CAN ALSO ENLIST THE SUPPORT OF A CORPORATION TO CONTRIBUTE COMPUTER EQUIPMENT TO YOUR SCHOOL.

I WOULD LIKE TO COMMEND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF SUCCESSFUL RURAL EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS WHO ARE WITH US TODAY. I WANT TO EXPRESS MY SINCERE APPRECIATION TO YOU FOR BEING HERE AND SHARING YOUR EXEMPLARY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS WITH ALL OF US. I WISH YOU CONTINUED SUCCESS. TO EACH OF THE STATE'S TEAM MEMBERS, I WISH YOU SUCCESS IN DEVELOPING STRATEGIES TO ENCOURAGE THE FORMULATION OF PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF RURAL EDUCATION.

I AM PERSONALLY VERY ENCOURAGED AND VERY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR RURAL EDUCATION. YOUR COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION IS APPARENT TO ME. I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL YOU WILL HAVE OUR CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR RURAL EDUCATION. BUT I WANT YOU ALSO TO KNOW THAT THE SUCCESS OF THE PARTNERSHIPS IN EDUCATION PROGRAM IS BECAUSE OF YOUR WORK AND YOUR DEDICATION.

Conclusion

It has been my experience, that our farmer-scientist-President-author-educator, Thomas Jefferson in his famous Notes on Virginia was correct when he wrote:

"Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God, if he ever had a chosen people..."

I envy you who are going to spend your lives working the land or engaged in business connected with agriculture which allows you to live in rural America.

I'd like to leave you with an observation on the joys and satisfactions of farming by the late Louis Bromfield, writer and superb Ohio farmer, which I think is equally applicable to the joys of rural living:

"I know of no intellectual satisfaction greater than that of talking to a good intelligent farmer or livestock breeder who, instinctively perhaps, knows what many less fortunate men endeavor most of their lives in vain to learn from books, or the satisfaction of seeing a whole landscape, a whole small world change from a half-desert into a rich ordered green valley inhabited by happy people, secure and prosperous, who each day create and add a little more to the world in which they live.

"WHO EACH SEASON SEE THEIR VALLEY GROW RICHER AND MORE BEAUTIFUL, WHO ARE AWAKE ALIKE OF THE BEAUTY OF THE DEER COMING DOWN TO THE PONDS IN THE EVENING AND THE MYSTERY AND MAGNIFICENCE OF A PRIZE WINNING POTATO OR STALK OF CELERY, WHO RECOGNIZE ALIKE THE BEAUTY OF A FIELD WITH A RICH CROP IN WHICH THERE ARE NO 'POOR SPOTS' AND THE BEAUTY OF A FINE SOW AND HER LITTER.

THESE ARE, IT SEEMS TO ME, AMONG THE PEOPLE WHO BELONG, THE FORTUNATE ONES WHO KNOW AND HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN WHITHER THEY WERE BOUND..."

IT HAS BEEN MY PLEASURE TO BE HERE TODAY. I LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING THE SUCCESS STORIES I AM CERTAIN YOU WILL HAVE TO TELL ABOUT PARTNERSHIPS AND ABOUT A NEW AND RENEWED EXCELLENCE FOR RURAL EDUCATION IN AMERICA.

GOOD LUCK AND GOD BLESS YOU IN ALL YOUR FUTURE ENDEAVORS IN SUPPORT OF RURAL EDUCATION AND RURAL FAMILIES.

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